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Constitution of the New
England Anti-slavery
Society with an address
to the public.

Boston, 1832.

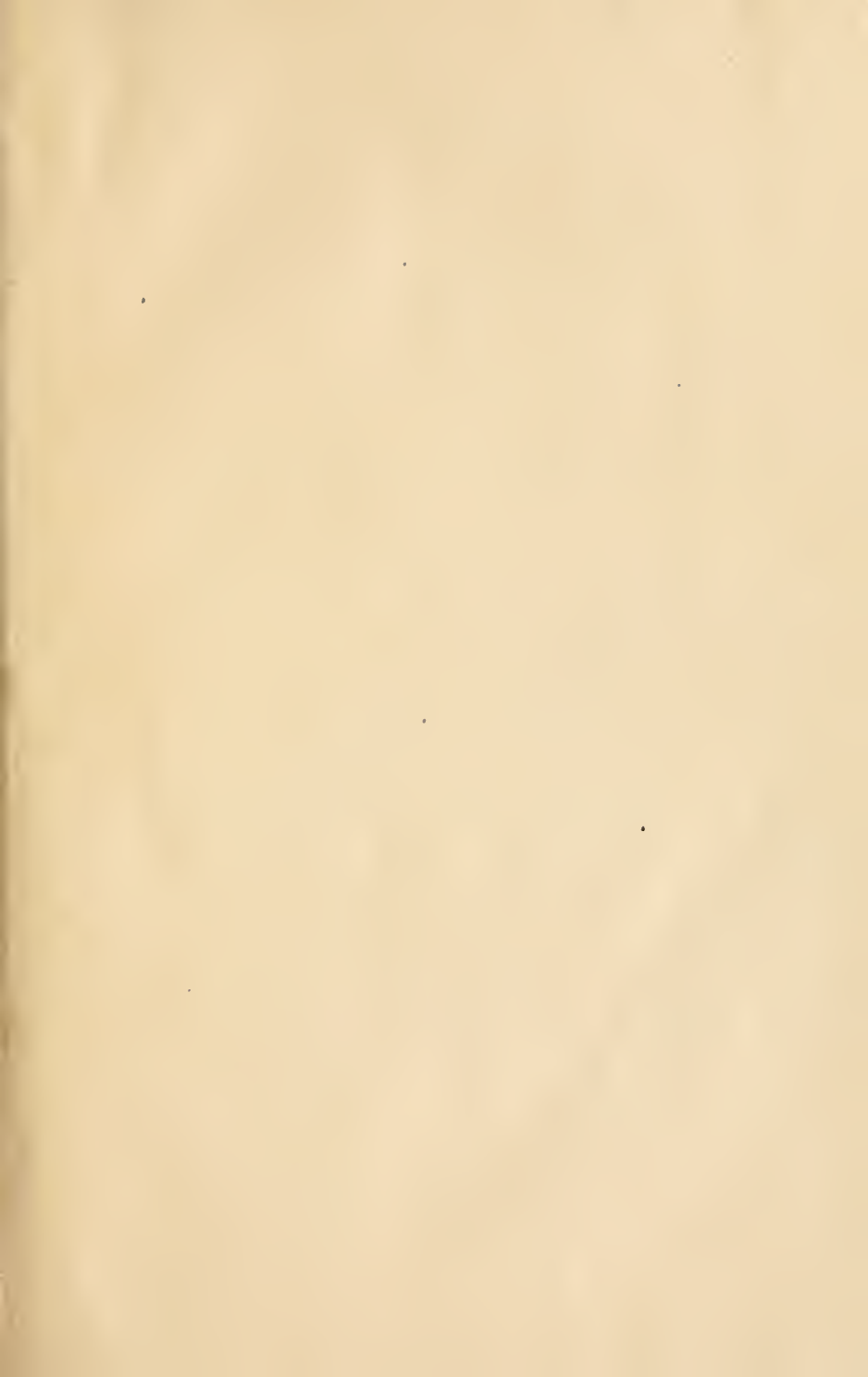


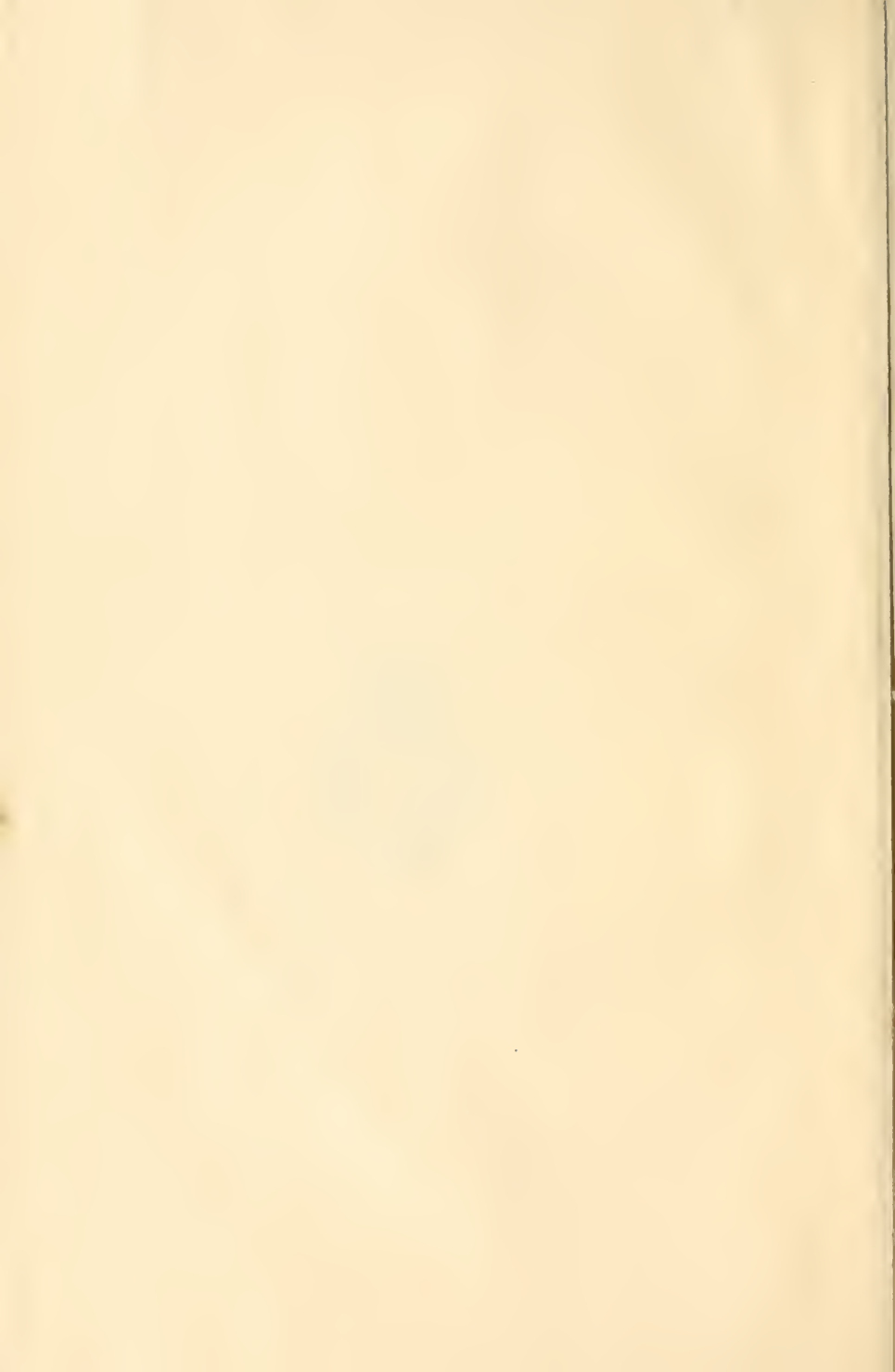


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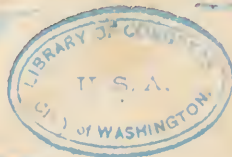
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CONSTITUTION

OF THE

Massachusetts
NEW-ENGLAND ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY:

WITH AN

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC.



BOSTON:

PRINTED BY GARRISON AND KNAPP.

1832.

1847
May
Cotton

CONSTITUTION.

We, the undersigned, hold that every person, of full age and sane mind, has a right to immediate freedom from personal bondage of whatsoever kind, unless imposed by the sentence of the law for the commission of some crime.

We hold that man cannot, consistently with reason, religion, and the eternal and immutable principles of justice, be the property of man.

We hold that whoever retains his fellow man in bondage, is guilty of a grievous wrong.

We hold that a mere difference of complexion is no reason why any man should be deprived of any of his natural rights, or subjected to any political disability.

While we advance these opinions as the principles on which we intend to act, we declare that we will not operate on the existing relations of society by other than peaceful and lawful means, and that we will give no countenance to violence or insurrection.

With these views, we agree to form ourselves into a Society, and to be governed by the rules, specified in the following Constitution, viz.

ARTICLE 1. This Society shall be called the New-England Anti-Slavery Society.

ARTICLE 2. The objects of the Society shall be to endeavor, by all means sanctioned by law, humanity and religion, to

effect the Abolition of Slavery in the United States, to improve the character and condition of the free people of color, to inform and correct public opinion in relation to their situation and rights, and obtain for them equal civil and political rights and privileges with the whites.

ARTICLE 3. Any person by signing the Constitution, and paying to the Treasurer fifteen dollars as a life subscription, or two dollars annually, shall be considered a member of the Society, and entitled to a voice and vote in all its meetings, and to a copy of any publications or communications which may be distributed among its members. Honorary members may be chosen by a vote of the Society.

ARTICLE 4. There shall be an annual meeting of the Society on the second Wednesday in January, at which a report of the transactions of the Society for the past year, and of its income, expenditures and funds, shall be presented by the Board of Managers, and the following officers elected by ballot, viz. A President, two Vice Presidents, six Counsellors, a Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary and Recording Secretary, who shall hold their respective offices until the next annual meeting.

ARTICLE 5. The said twelve officers shall together constitute a Board of Managers, to whom shall be entrusted the disposition of the funds, and the management of the concerns of the Society. They shall have power to fill any vacancy, which may occur in their board, until the next meeting of the Society ; and it shall be their duty to consider and adopt the means best calculated to promote the objects of the Society, and report the same to the Society.

ARTICLE 6. Meetings of the Managers may be called by the President, or in his absence by either of the Vice Presidents, when they shall judge it necessary, or on application to them from any one of the Managers for any specific purpose ; and special meetings of the Society may be called by vote of the Managers, or on application of the members of the Society to the Recording Secretary, and the time and place of the meetings of the Society shall be determined by the Managers.

ARTICLE 7. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Society and of the Managers ; in his absence, one of the Vice Presidents ; and in their absence, the oldest Manager present.

ARTICLE 8. The Treasurer shall collect the subscriptions and grants to the Society, and hold all its funds, and make payments according to the votes of the Managers ; and he shall keep a true account of the same, and render an annual statement to accompany the annual report to the Society.

ARTICLE 9. The Corresponding Secretary shall receive and keep all communications or publications directed to the Society, and transmit those issued by them, and shall correspond with the agents, or any other bodies or individuals according to the directions of the Society or the Managers.

ARTICLE 10. The Recording Secretary shall notify all meetings of the Society, and of the Board of Managers, and shall keep the Records of the same and of the transactions of the Society, and shall furnish copies of any votes to any persons, when required by the President, or a Vice President.

ARTICLE 11. The Board of Managers may appoint an agent or agents, to be employed in any part of the United States, in obtaining or communicating intelligence, in the publication or distribution of tracts, books, or papers, or in the execution of any measure, which may be adopted, to promote the objects of the Society. The compensation of the agents shall be determined by the Board of Managers.

ARTICLE 12. Any Anti-Slavery Society, or any association founded on kindred principles in the New-England States, may become auxiliary to this Society, by contributing to its funds, and by sending a delegate, or delegates, to attend its meetings.

ARTICLE 13. There shall be a regular meeting of the Society on the last Monday of every month.

ARTICLE 14. The Constitution may be altered at any annual meeting, by a vote of two thirds of those present.

LIST OF OFFICERS.

PRESIDENT.

ARNOLD BUFFUM.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

JAMES C. ODIORNE,
ALONZO LEWIS.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

RECORDING SECRETARY.

JOSHUA COFFIN.

TREASURER.

MICHAEL H. SIMPSON.

COUNSELLORS.

MOSES THACHER,
JOHN E. FULLER,
OLIVER JOHNSON,
ROBERT B. HALL,
BENJAMIN C. BACON,
JOHN STIMPSON.

At the regular monthly meeting of the New-England Anti-Slavery Society, held on the evening of Feb. 27, 1832,

Voted, That a copy of the Constitution and Address of the Society be sent to all the editors of newspapers in New-England, respectfully requesting them to insert in their columns a notice of the formation of the Society, with the Constitution, and such portions of the Address as they may find room to extract.

Voted, That a copy of the same also be presented to every clergyman in New-England, earnestly soliciting his co-operation in promoting the objects of the Society.

Voted, That the friends of the people of color, and the people of color themselves, in the various towns in New-England, be invited to form auxiliaries to this Society, and to notify the Corresponding Secretary of their organization as soon as may be practicable.

ADDRESS.

FELLOW-CITIZENS :

The object of our Society is neither war nor sedition. Although the sufferings of that class of our brethren, for whose rights we plead, are immeasurably greater, than would be deemed sufficient with any other people to gird on the armor, and march to the field of battle and of blood ; yet, we hope ever to imbibe the spirit of Him, who says, ‘ Resist not evil ; ’—‘ they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.’ Governed by such a spirit, the weapons of our warfare can never be carnal. The only influence we can exert must be that of *moral suasion*, and not of *coercion*. In the truth, and the God of truth, alone we trust, for the success of our exertions ; and with the truth, and in the name of the God of truth, we plead for the cause of humanity.

The fundamental principle upon which our Constitution is based, is, OUR SAVIOUR’S GOLDEN RULE : *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.* Hence the grand articles in our creed :—‘ That God hath made of *one blood* all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth ; ’*

* Acts xvii. 26.

—‘ that all men are created *equal* ; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights ; and that among these are life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness.’ *

Based upon such principles, guided by such maxims, and holding such articles of faith, our Society must necessarily be what its name signifies. We are, from principle, *opposed to Slavery*. We believe, too, that such a spirit becomes the very genius of our country. The whole American people *ought* to be an *Anti-Slavery Society*. This is the very first principle upon which our government is built. The spirit of civil and religious liberty requires it. The Declaration of ’76 requires it. The spirit and letter of our Constitution require it. The spirit of the gospel of Christ, and the voice of public, commutative and retributive justice, imperiously demand it.

We must, then, be wholly inconsistent with ourselves, and the principles by which we profess to be governed, if we do not, by every laudable exertion, induce as many of our fellow-citizens as possible to become *anti-slaveholders*, and ‘ endeavor by all means sanctioned by law, humanity, and religion, to effect the abolition of slavery in the United States.’ To effect this object, we consider it our imperious duty to diffuse, as widely as possible, a knowledge of just and correct principles on the subject of slavery ; to arouse the consciences of the wise ; to enlighten the understandings of the ignorant ; and incessantly to appeal to every principle of humanity, benevolence, justice and natural affection, in behalf of that degraded and wretched class of our colored brethren, who are retained in ignominious and cruel bondage.

We believe that slavery is an evil *now* ; and, of course, the slaves ought to be *now* emancipated. If the thief is found in possession of stolen property, he is required *immediately* to relinquish it. The slaveholder and the man-stealer are in unlawful possession of the stolen sons and daughters of Africa ; they ought, therefore, *immediately* to set them free. Who will say,

* Declaration of Independence.

‘ We must continue supremely and sordidly selfish *for years to come*, and leave the dispensation of justice to the third and fourth generation of our posterity ’ ? We say, that slavery is an evil and a curse ; what right have we then, to entail this evil and curse upon unborn generations ? Every principle of humanity, of benevolence, or of equity, which requires that the slaves be emancipated at all, demands that they be emancipated *now*. Let us suppose ourselves in the place of the African.* Here, then, are two millions of *our* parents, of *our* children, of *our* wives, and of *our* brethren and sisters, in thralldom. Here are *our* wives, and *our* sisters, and *our* mothers, and *our* daughters, treated like brutes, abused to the most shameful purposes of sensuality, and *compelled* to the most ignominious prostitution ! Do we then contend for *gradual* abolition ? Do we say, the time has not yet arrived for *our* kindred, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, to be set at liberty ?—that they must be manumitted only one, two, a dozen, or a score at a time, and those immediately transported beyond the seas ? Who, reflecting and weeping over the bondage of their *own* parents, wives, sons or daughters, would thus act the part of maniacs ? But, ‘ all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ; for this is the law and the prophets.’ Every principle which proves slavery unjust, an evil and a curse, equally demonstrates the duty of *immediate* manumission.

Believing the foregoing principles to be established, we cannot but view some of the measures now strenuously advocated and pursued, in our own country, on the subject of slavery, as *radically wrong*, and calculated to perpetuate, rather than remove, the evil we so much deprecate. Having no disposition to impugn the motives of those who advocate the system of Colonization, and willing to admit that many have put their hands to that work from feelings of the purest benevolence ; we

* We use the terms *African*, and *sons and daughters of Africa*, for the sake of *distinction*. We believe that every colored person, who is either born in this country, or forced to make that the place of his residence, is as really an American, as any white-born citizen of New-England.

must still consider them as guided by a delusive view of the whole subject, contemplating the object of their desires through a false medium, and pursuing a course which, in its ultimate tendency, must involve our country in remediless ruin. That the grand project of the ' Colonization Society ' is wholly chimerical, is demonstrated by the following calculation of the magnanimous Charles Stuart :—

' The United States have about 2,000,000 slaves, and about 500,000 free colored people.

The American Colonization Society has existed for 13 years, and has exported yearly, upon an average, about 150 persons.

Meanwhile the natural yearly increase has been 56,000 souls ; and nearly a million have died in slavery !!

But it may be said, this is only the beginning—more may be expected hereafter.—Let us see.

The average price of transporting each individual is calculated at 30 dollars : suppose it to be reduced to 20, and then, as 56,000 must be exported yearly, in order merely to prevent increase, 1,120,000 dollars would be yearly requisite simply for transportation. Where is this vast sum to come from ? Or suppose it supplied, still, in the mass of crime and wretchedness, as it now exists, there would be no *decrease* ! Two millions of human beings every 30 years would still be *born and die* in Slavery !!

But perhaps you wish to extinguish the crime in thirty years.

Then you must begin by transporting at least 100,000 yearly. In order to do this, you must have an annual income of upwards of 2,000,000 dollars ; and if you have not only to transport, but also to purchase, you would probably want yearly, *twenty millions* more ! !

Where are you to get this ?—

Or suppose it got, and still one generation would perish in their wretchedness ; 2,000,000 of immortal souls—plundered by you of the most sacred rights of human nature ; of rights *always the same*, and everlastingly *inalienable*, however plundered—would have perished *unredressed*, and gone to confront you at the bar of God.

And will He not make inquisition for blood ? And what will it avail you to say, ' Oh, we satisfied ourselves, and traversed land and sea, and spent thousands to satisfy others, that if we transported a few hundreds or thousands of our oppressed fellow-subjects to a distant country, yearly, with care, we might guiltlessly leave the remaining hundreds of thousands, or the millions, in slavery, and harmlessly indulge the invincible repugnance which we felt to a colored skin. We really thought it better, to exile our colored brethren from their native country, or to render their lives in it intolerable by scorn, should they obstinately persist in remaining in it ;—we really thought this better, than humbling ourselves before our brother and our God, and returning to both with repenting and undissembling love.'

But, supposing the scheme of colonization to be *practicable*, and that our whole colored population can be removed within the period of thirty years ; where is the *justice* of such a measure ? Estimating the whole number of slaves and free colored

persons in this country, at two millions, and allowing only for one eighth of the whole number to die on their passage, and by necessary exposure to disease and a change of climate, on arriving in Africa ; we have, in addition to the two millions, who must ‘ *be born and die in slavery,*’ during this thirty years, a sacrifice of *two hundred and fifty thousand lives !* Here, then, at the lowest possible estimate, are *two millions, two hundred and fifty thousand*, who are either to be *born*, and *live*, and *die in slavery*, or to literally throw away their lives, by being *decoyed* or *coerced* beyond the seas ! If this is *justice*, if this is *humanity*, if this is *philanthropy*, we must confess ourselves wholly ignorant of the laws of God, of the principles of equity, of the letter and spirit of the ‘ *golden rule,*’ and of that great moral precept, which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Besides, we are constrained to consider the emancipated slave as really entitled, *by right*, to a peaceable possession in this land of light and boasted freedom, as any white-born American. He is, indeed, as really an American as any of us. This is his *native land*. It is the soil which has been sprinkled with his own blood, and which he has literally earned, perhaps twenty times over, by ‘ *the sweat of his brow.*’ To deprive him of this possession, is to deprive him of his *birth-right*. It is to rob him of that inheritance, to which he has an infinitely better title, than the *master* for whom he has toiled, to the plantation which he *calls his own*.

Our colored population have ever contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the support of our government. Even the *slave* pays taxes by the hand of his master ; and the excise thus demanded for the support of a *free government*, is the *price of his blood*. We affirm, then, that our colored population have the *right of protection* in this their native land, and are justly entitled to every constitutional franchise of free citizens. To deprive them of this right, either by stratagem, or by coercion, is *tyranny*. If the color of the skin is to give construction to our Constitution and laws ; let us, at once, begin the work of excision. Let us raise an army of pure whites, if such an army

can be found ; and let us drive out and transport to foreign climes, men, women and children, who cannot bring the most satisfactory vouchers, that their veins are flowing with the purest English blood. Indeed, let us shut up our ports against our own mariners, who are returning from an India voyage, and whose cheeks and muscles could not wholly withstand the influence of the breezes and tropics to which they were exposed. Let us make every shade of complexion, every difference of stature, and every contraction of a muscle, a *Shibboleth*, to detect and cut off a brother Ephraimite, at the fords of Jordan. Though such a crusade would turn every man's sword against his fellow ; yet, it might establish the right of precedence to different features, statures and colors, and oblige some friends of colonization to test the feasibility and equity of their own favorite scheme.

From the attention with which we have been able to examine the subject, we are convinced, that the system of colonization, so zealously advocated by many in our country, instead of effecting the cure for which they profess to prescribe, must directly tend to perpetuate the curse of which we complain. To remove the *free* colored population from the slaveholding states, enhances the value of slave labor, and increases the temptation to multiply their numbers. It removes the most fruitful source of information to the slaves themselves ; and, of course, preserves them in ignorance of their natural rights.* This has ever been a desideratum with the planter, and a primary object of legislation at the South. To enhance the value of slave labor, and to hold the slaves in perpetual ignorance, may be reckoned the fundamental principles of slavery itself ; and although we might be astonished to hear the logic of tyrants from the tongues of freemen, yet strange as it may appear, these very doctrines

* Indeed, we are told publicly, by those who advocate the system of colonization, that the slaves must not be taught to read even the *Bible* ; because, forsooth, they will then read our Declaration of Independence, and our Fourth-of-July Orations, and our panegyrics upon the blessings of liberty ; and by and by, ' some black La Fayette ' will rise up to put them in possession of these natural and inalienable rights !—*Mr. Ladd's Speech before Col. Soc. of Mass. Jan. 27.*

are effectually supported by colonization, and the necessity of holding the slaves in ignorance is strenuously advocated by its most zealous and liberal patrons. We hence find that the number of slaves has actually increased since the Colonization Society commenced its operations ; * and it is no less a matter of fact, that some of the most influential and opulent planters, who were at first jealous of its principles and designs, have since come forward and contributed liberally to its funds.

While we plead for the immediate manumission of those in bondage, and, at the same time, consider it, next to slavery itself, cruel and oppressive either to decoy or coerce the free people of color out of our country ; we hold ourselves bound, by every laudable and lawful exertion, to improve their character and condition, to instruct them in the first principles of civil and religious liberty, and to qualify both bond and free for holding rank, and enjoying privileges in common with other citizens of the States and Nation.

Such exertions as these we consider not only as an act of justice to our long degraded and abused colored population ; but as an imperious duty which we owe to our country. They are the only means in our power to prevent the effusion of human blood, and avert the judgments of Heaven. Our hearts respond to the sentiment and language of an eminent statesman, † ‘ I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just.’ The slaves cannot be long retained in bondage. If their tyrants do not voluntarily break the yoke of their vassalage, the providence of God and the judgments of Heaven will doubtless break it for them ; and we venture to predict, that a way will ere long be opened for them to seek and obtain redress. Their sighs and groans have long ascended up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and their blood has long cried to him from the ground. Is it then unreasonable to suppose, that God is now saying emphatically, both by his word and providence, ‘ *Shall I not visit*

* Compare the last Census of the United States with that of 1820.

† Mr Jefferson.

for these things ? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ? In what way he will redress the wrongs of our colored brethren, we do not pretend to designate ; but we are constrained to believe that the time of their deliverance is at hand. It is our heart's desire and prayer to God, that none of our countrymen may be so infatuated as to destroy themselves by fighting against his word and providence, and the eternal principles of truth and equity.

The slaves cannot be long kept in ignorance of the first and most invaluable legacy of nature. The march of free enquiry and a knowledge of equal rights, the very first principles of emancipation, is, ' ONWARD.' We may forbid the philanthropist to teach and the captive to learn ; but, we may as well undertake to clip the wings and stay the course of the celestial messenger, who has received the divine mandate to preach the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth. We may as well forbid the beams of the meridian sun to gild the height of the Andes ; essay to roll back the tide of the ocean ; command the dew-drop to stay itself forever in the sky ; puff back the northern blast with the breath of our nostrils ; or attempt to compass and ' bind Areturus and his sons ' with a shred of flax ; as to think of holding our colored brethren in perpetual ignorance and perpetual bondage. If the master will not instruct his slave, still the slave will take it upon himself to learn. Already the toil-worn bondman, who, by his own vigilance and sagacity, has picked up a knowledge of letters, collects, in sequestered groups, his fellow slaves, at the close of their daily task, and, like the Jewish high priest, ' rehearses in their ears all the words ' of the law of liberty. He reads to them orations, dissertations and panegyrics, which embrace the very first principles of our civil institutions and political rights ; and which instamp upon their minds the indelible impression, that *they have the same title to be free*. These intonations and songs of prospective liberty, flow as sweetly from the lips of a fellow slave, and as readily vibrate with their heart-strings, as the most impassioned eloquence of an Adams, a Hancock or a

Henry ever thrilled through the bosoms of those revolutionary heroes, whose names are now enrolled upon the page of history, as having 'bid defiance to the thunders of Britain,' and resolved either to die, or to break to pieces the yoke of foreign domination.

To prevent the scenes of St. Domingo from being acted here, we call upon the nation to be *just*. To say that immediate emancipation will only increase the wretchedness of the colored people, and that we must pursue a system of *gradual* abolition ; is to present to us the double paradox, that we must continue to do evil, in order to cure the evil which we are doing ; and that we must continue to be unjust, and to '*do evil that good may come.*' There is, we believe, but one alternative. The master must manumit his slave, or the slave *will manumit himself*. We have no doubt, that the God of heaven, who is a God of justice, is, at this moment, in his word and providence, setting before the Southern planter this very alternative ; and this alternative embraces 'life and death, a blessing and a curse.' To choose the first, and say to the slave, **BE FREE**, is to shut the floodgates of human wo and of human blood. To choose the latter, and hold the colored man in vassalage, must, ere long, break up 'the fountains of the great deep,' and have a direct tendency to unsheathe the sword of vengeance, revolution, carnage and death. On this subject, we can hardly feel that any language is too strong. We appeal to the better judgment and patriotism of our fellow citizens ; we appeal to the understanding, conscience and heart ; we appeal to all the tender sympathies of humanity and natural affection ; we appeal to every citizen, who deprecates the horrors of St. Domingo and Southampton ; and we conjure every one, who is capable of feeling or of reflection, to weigh in an even balance the present evils and inevitable consequences of slavery. In the language of a distinguished statesman and scholar,* on another subject, we do but express the real feelings and sentiments of our hearts on this :—'On this theme, my emotions are unmit-

* Fisher Ames.

terable. If I could find words for them, if my powers bore any proportion to my zeal, I would swell my voice to such a note of remonstrance, it should reach every log-house beyond the mountains. I would say to the inhabitants, wake from your false security : your cruel dangers, your more cruel apprehensions, are soon to be renewed : the wounds, yet unhealed, are to be torn open again : in the day time, your path through the woods will be ambushed ; the darkness of midnight will glitter with the blaze of your dwellings. You are a father—the blood of your sons shall fatten your corn-field : you are a mother—the war-hoop shall wake the sleep of the cradle.

‘ On this subject, you need not suspect any deception on your feelings : it is a spectacle of horror, which cannot be overdrawn. If you have nature in your hearts, they will speak a language, compared with which all I have said or can say will be poor and frigid.’

To do away the horrors of slavery, and prevent such ravages as are here depicted, we do most earnestly invite the co-operation of our fellow citizens ; and we can hardly conceive how any one is entitled to the name of a philanthropist or of a Christian, who is either ashamed or afraid thus to show himself A FRIEND TO HIS COUNTRY AND A FRIEND TO THE BLACK MAN.

ARNOLD BUFFUM, *President.*

WM. LLOYD GARRISON, *Secretary.*



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